

Top 10 Fundraising Tips

1. **Plan your fundraising.** What do you want to achieve? Why? What do you need the money for? Where do you think the money will come from? What resources do you have to invest in fundraising? If you can't answer any of these questions, you're not ready to start fundraising.
2. **Put systems in place.** Without systems you will find it difficult to sustain your fundraising. Get a database and use it; decide who you will target for funding – trusts, individuals, Lottery, business or a mixture? establish how you will look after donors and when you will communicate with them.
3. **Review the market.** Look at your competitors – who supports them? Are there programmes like yours that have failed or succeeded? Why? Is there an organisation in your area doing similar work? How are you different? Fundraising is competitive so it's vital that you stand out from the crowd. Knowing who you're up against will help you to position yourself effectively.
4. **Get everyone on board.** You should set out the reasons why you are fundraising and what your objectives are (see point 1) so that trustees, staff and volunteers know why you are fundraising.
5. **Research your donors.** You need to identify who is likely to support your organisation - and being wealthy is not enough. If I had £1 for every time I've been told to ask a certain businessman for money, I'd be rich! Look at your projects, your beneficiaries and your organisational vision. Who supports the work you are doing? There are numerous resources out there to help with your research – too many to mention here – but start by reading local and national press; keeping up to date with sector developments; and using your networks.
6. **Network.** Spread the word about your organisation. Be known as leaders in your field. Use networks available to you - through trustees, volunteers, professional groups and your donors. Consider online networking – ask your Trustees and CEO if they'll introduce your organisation to their Linked In contacts or send out occasional tweets on your behalf.
7. **Stay 'on message'.** Fundraising is another way of communicating to your audience and, while the methods of delivery may be different, they should still reflect your core messages. If you're fundraising for a programme that doesn't fit with your overall vision, you need to ask yourself why. If you don't, potential donors will.
8. **Fundraise within resources.** Regardless of how many fundraisers you have (or don't have) you need to be realistic about what you can deliver. How much time can you allocate to fundraising? What tasks need to be delivered e.g. research, applications, meetings, planning? Who will deliver these tasks? Often fundraising focuses solely on target but if it's unrealistic within current resources, you need to either reduce the target or devote more resources to fundraising.
9. **Use trustees effectively.** Who has the best networks? Who is happy to ask for money (because not all will be)? Who is most knowledgeable or passionate about your organisation (hopefully, all of them!). It is vital that trustees lend their support to fundraising. They may not all be comfortable asking for money but they don't all have to be – as long as they will introduce your organisation to their networks and be an ambassador for your work (which they should be anyway).
10. **Say Thank You.** It may be obvious, but you'd be surprised how often donors aren't thanked. You can't say thank you enough. Provide the personal touch – a scanned signature is unlikely to make anyone feel their gift meant much. £20 may be a small donation to you but it could mean a lot to the donor. And you never know how much could follow on from the smallest gift. If you don't thank people you are closing the doors to future support and wasting all the effort put into getting that initial donation.